

# Oktoberfest: a unique & evolving German tradition

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It all started with wedding bells and a horse race on October 12, 1810.

Four years after Bavaria had become a kingdom, crown prince Ludwig of Bavaria (who was to be King Ludwig I) married princess Therese of Saxon-Hildburghausen. The official festivities lasted five days and included parades of riflemen, music, eating and drinking. The festivities ended with a horse race held on a green, which was situated in those days outside of the city limits and named "Theresienwiese" ("Theresa's Green") in honor of the bride.

Over the next years the horse race was repeated and the Oktoberfest, also called "Wiesn," was born.

In 1811, an agricultural festival was added to the horse race. Its main attraction was a competition in which the most splendid horses and oxen were awarded prizes. The horse race ceased to be held after 1938, but the agricultural festival has been a part of the Oktoberfest up to this day. It takes part ev-



*Thousands of people celebrate Oktoberfest in one of the main beer halls on the fest grounds*

ery four years on the southern part of the Theresienwiese. In these years, as there is less space for the Oktoberfest, it's called a "small" Oktoberfest.

The people from Munich wanted to have a little fun also. In 1818, the first carousel and two big swings were set up. In addition, there finally were

some beer counters. But the people wanted more: In 1896 the first of the huge beer tents was started as a joint venture of proprietors and different breweries.

Only breweries from Munich are allowed to sell beer at the Oktoberfest.

In the years to come, the attractions of the Oktoberfest kept getting more and more exotic. In 1879, the organizers of the fair presented an African tribe, and in 1880 (the first year that electric light was used at the Oktoberfest) you could marvel at a group of wax figures.

In 1881 the biggest chicken rotisserie in the world opened on the fair grounds.

Finally, in 1892, visitors could drink their beer out of the famous 1-liter glass mugs for the first time.

Mayor Thomas Wimmer established a new Wiesn tradition

in 1950. At high noon, on the first day of the Oktoberfest, the mayor tapped the first beer barrel in the Schottenhamel tent shouting "Ozapft is!" ("the barrel has been tapped"). This tradition continues today.

Beer, which was traditionally tapped from wood containers, was tapped from metal kegs for the first time in 1984.

The Oktoberfest is the biggest fair of the world and it's known worldwide.

What's special and attractive about the Oktoberfest is its ability to combine a celebration for the locals with international events.

It is a successful combination of traditions, and new ideas and influences.

The Rhein-Main Ticket and Tours Office offers trips to the Oktoberfest Sept. 21-23 and Sept. 25-27. Call 330-7459 for more information.



*A waitress has her hands full delivering food to hungry patrons during the 2000 Oktoberfest*